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HANFORD SURPLUS URANIUM SHIPPED TO PORTSMOUTH SITE IN OHIO

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has begun shipments of surplus uranium from the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington to the DOE's Portsmouth Site in Ohio for consolidated storage.

The first shipment arrived in Portsmouth August 1, and included approximately 16 metric tons (a metric ton equals 2204 pounds) of uranium trioxide powder in three full metal "T-Hoppers" - inverted, funnel shaped containers surrounded by a heavy frame. Uranium trioxide is a low-enriched uranium powder that resembles small spherical fertilizer pellets.

A fourth T-Hopper included in the shipment was empty since weight restrictions for truck transport limits the load to only three, full T-Hoppers. Over the next few months, DOE and Fluor Hanford, Inc. (FHI) plan to ship147 full and 39 empty T-Hoppers containing 670 metric tons of surplus uranium trioxide to the Portsmouth Site.

In addition to the uranium trioxide, DOE also plans to ship approximately 235 metric tons of uranium metal billets to Portsmouth. Together, these shipments will reduce Hanford's surplus uranium inventory by approximately 900 metric tons.

"This project will move over 600 tons of uranium off the Hanford Site this year," said Leo Guillen, DOE's Project Manager for Uranium Disposition. "Its removal allows us to consolidate our remaining uranium, so we can prepare former storage facilities for deactivation and decommissioning. That saves taxpayer dollars and takes us another step forward on cleanup."

In the June 2000 "Environmental Assessment for Disposition of Surplus Hanford Site Uranium," DOE identified 1,866 metric tons of uranium on the Hanford Site as surplus. DOE determined that only the uranium trioxide and uranium metal billets have potentially positive market value.

There are 135 metric tons of slightly contaminated uranium fuel and five metric tons of miscellaneous scrap that will be designated as waste and disposed of on-site at Hanford's low-level burial grounds in the 200 Areas, part of the Central Plateau.

The remaining 825 metric tons of uranium at Hanford will be transported from present storage locations in Hanford's 200 and 300 Areas to an interim, consolidated location in the 200 Area, pending final disposition.

"We're extremely proud of starting these shipments, it's a big step," said Singh Bath, FHI's Accelerated Deactivation Project Manager. "This project is a financial, technical, and logistical challenge and shows what we can accomplish with good coordination between DOE, FHI, and the regulators."

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